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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 16, 2003

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## **Senate Agrees, Boating Hit-and-Run a Felony**

*Punishment now same as vehicular hit-and-run*

LANSING – Legislation imposing stricter sentencing guidelines for boaters involved in hit-and-run accidents was unanimously approved Wednesday by the Senate.

Co-sponsored by Sen. Ron Jelinek (R-Three Oaks) Senate Bills 658 and 659 change the penalties from a misdemeanor to a felony for the operator of a boat involved in a hit-and-run accident resulting in death or serious injury. The change makes the penalty for this crime the same as those for a hit-and-run accident causing death or serious injury in an automobile.

“Changing the penalties for a boating hit-and-run to a felony is a great step in making Michigan’s waterways safer for all citizens,” Jelinek said. “Boaters need to be responsible for their actions and should be held to the same standards as car drivers.”

Currently, the driver of a boat involved in such an accident is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum sentence of 90 days. Under the proposed changes, someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing death would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines. Someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing serious impairment would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.

Senate Bills 658 and 659 now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.